



U.S. Department of Justice

**Stephen J. Murphy
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan**

*Suite 2001
211 West Fort Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277
Fax: (313) 226-3561*



For Immediate Release:

Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758
Vera Fedorak (313) 202- 3407

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EVENT: Guilty Plea

Defendant: Labaron Wardlaw et al

TWO PLEAD GUILTY TO MAJOR DRUG CONSPIRACY CHARGES

Two defendants involved in a drug trafficking conspiracy centered in Jackson, MI, have entered guilty pleas in United States District Court to drug charges announced United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy today.

United States Attorney Murphy was joined in the announcement by Valerie Goddard, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Pleading guilty today before U.S. District Judge John Corbett O'Meara was Labaron Wardlaw, 34 from Detroit. Nequita Jackson, 20, also of Detroit, pleaded guilty before Judge O'Meara yesterday, August 8, 2007.

In entering their guilty pleas, both defendants acknowledged that from October 21, 2005, through March 24, 2006, they engaged in a drug trafficking conspiracy by supplying

several drug locations in Jackson, Michigan, with crack cocaine for resale to others. The conspiracy involved in excess of 1.5 kilograms of cocaine base.

“This prosecution shows the powerful reach into criminality that joint cooperation between federal and local authorities can have,” stated United States Attorney Murphy. “Anytime a drug dealer considers marketing their poisonous wares in any community in this district, they should be aware that a united front of law enforcement will be present to investigate and shed light on their illicit activities.”

Special Agent in Charge Valerie Goddard said, “ Our focus on gun crime through the Project Safe Neighborhood initiative in Jackson many times leads us to uncovering large drug conspiracies such as we see in this case. We know that drugs and guns go hand in hand resulting in an increase of violent crime. ATF's strategy of focusing on the guns and violence has been successful in shutting down a major supplier of narcotics in the Jackson area. I commend Chief Ervin L. Portis, Jackson Police Department, for implementing the Project Safe Neighborhood Initiative in Jackson and know that he will continue to see positive results.”

The two defendants entered their guilty pleas in accordance with plea agreements they negotiated with the government. The charges to which the defendants both pled guilty carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, a \$4,000,000 fine, or both.

Judge O'Meara scheduled Jackson's sentencing for December 4, 2007 and Wardlaw's sentencing for November 7, 2007.

The investigation of this case has been conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with cooperation and assistance from the City of Jackson Police Department and the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Susan E. Gillooly, to whom United States Attorney Murphy offered sincere thanks.